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ABSTRACT

Teachers have long surrounded young students with a print-rich environment within the classroom, but the purpose of this lesson is to bring the print-rich environment of the community into the classroom through the use of environmental print, enabling emergent readers to delight in the realization that they are indeed readers. During 10 to 20 lessons, each 15 minutes long, K-2 students will: help collect examples of environmental print; demonstrate their ability to read environmental print; display their examples of environmental print; sort and classify their examples for inclusion in class books; spend time reading the books as individuals, in pairs, or in groups; become more aware of the environmental print in their community; celebrate their ability to read; and revel in their identity as readers, as members of the literacy club. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A letter to parents and a student rubric are attached. (RS)

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# From Stop Signs to the Golden Arches: Environmental Print


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## Grade Band

K-2

## Estimated Lesson Time

Ten to twenty 15-minute sessions

## Overview

The first big step toward reading is helping young students see themselves as readers. The purpose of this lesson is to help them make that leap through the use of environmental print. The lesson involves (1) bringing environmental print from the students' surrounding community into the classroom through artifacts and photographs; (2) making a visual display and class books that can be accessed and used by the students; and (3) giving the students plenty of opportunities to practice their reading skills and view themselves as competent readers and users of print.

## From Theory to Practice

In *Phonics They Use,* Patricia M. Cunningham lists some critical behaviors that need to be in place as students become successful readers. "They see themselves as readers and writers and new members of the 'literacy club.'" In *Month-By-Month Reading and Writing for Kindergarten,* Cunningham and co-writer Dorothy Hall suggest using environmental print: "Young children enjoy showing what they have learned in school, and environmental print gives them that opportunity each day even if they do not come from homes with books and magazines."

The primary goal of this lesson is to encourage children to see themselves as readers as they discover all of the environmental print that they are already capable of reading. Through this lesson the students and teacher will gather samples of environmental print from the neighborhood: signs, logos, brand names, and other print and non-print items that the children see and read in their neighborhood each day. As they display these artifacts in their classroom, they will be able to see how many different kinds of things they can read. As they read and problem-solve, they sort these artifacts and classify them—making them into special books that become part of their classroom library. These become well-loved books to read again and again. Best of all, these early emergent readers come to see themselves as readers, genuine members of the literacy club.

*Read More About*

Cunningham, Patricia M. 1995. *Phonics They Use: Words for Reading and Writing.* 2nd ed. New York, NY: HarperCollins College.

Hall, Dorothy P. and Patricia M. Cunningham. 1997 *Month-By-Month Reading and Writing for Kindergarten: Systematic, Multilevel Instruction.* Greensboro, NC: Carson-Dellosa Publishing.

## Student Objectives

Students will

- help collect examples of environmental print.
- demonstrate their ability to read environmental print.

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- display their examples of environmental print.
- sort and classify their examples of environmental print for inclusion in class books.
- spend time reading the books as individuals, in pairs, or in groups.
- become more aware of the environmental print in their community.
- celebrate their ability to read.
- revel in their identity as readers, members of the literacy club.

## Resources

- Parent Letter
- Rubric
- Kids' Safety Site from Texas Department of Transportation
- Example Traffic Signs

## Instructional Plan

### Resources

- Books
  - Canizares, Susan, and Pamela Chanko. 1998. *Signs*. Scholastic.
  - Tana Hoban. *I Read Signs*. Scholastic.
  - Tana Hoban. *I Read Symbols* Mulberry Books.
- Web site: Kids' Safety Site from Texas Department of Transportation
- Parent Letter
- Rubric
- Camera and film
- Materials to assemble classroom books and bind them

### Preparation

1. Choose one of the options for introducing this lesson and prepare the materials you will need: obtaining the books, bookmarking the Web site, and/or teaching about traffic safety.
2. Get a camera and film for taking pictures during this lesson or obtain a digital camera.
3. Plan to use a bulletin board, large table, or other area easily accessible to the students to use to display the artifacts they collect.
4. Assemble materials needed to make and bind class books.
5. Obtain several examples of environmental print: a Happy Meal sack, a Burger King crown, a cereal box, a pop can, and so forth.
6. Prepare two copies for each student of the parent survey.

### Instruction and Activities

1. This lesson works best for me if it follows a theme on traffic safety. During that theme, children learn many of the traffic signs: stop sign, railroad crossing, handicapped parking, school crossing, bike routes, and so on. We often make individual books of those signs. Then children are already attuned to environmental print. Another option is to use the books: *Signs* by Susan Canizares and Pamela Chanko, *I Read Signs* by Tana Hoban, and/or *I Read Symbols* by Tana Hoban to introduce the concept of environmental print. These books contain many of the signs that students might see

in their own neighborhood. The web site for the Traffic Signs also gives you examples of signs to use in introducing the concept of environmental print to the students.

2. Show the students the examples of environmental print that you have collected. See how many of them the children can easily identify. Ask the students how they can "read" the signs and artifacts. What clues are they using? Many children will connect them with a place, an experience, or an advertisement. Others may recognize letters or words. Still others can identify the logos, read them, and even be able to sing or say parts of the commercials connected to the various items of environmental print.
3. Explain that for the next several weeks, they may bring in examples like these of things they can read. I have often made this activity our Show and Tell for a two to three week period, and included this invitation in my weekly letter to parents encouraging them to help their children find examples of environmental print, and giving them the examples of what I brought to show the children.
4. As they bring in the items, have them show what they have found to the class, demonstrate their ability to read them, and arrange for them to include them in your classroom display. As a class, we celebrate each child and the items they brought to share—and our growth as readers. The children are amazed at how many things they can read and spend lots of time at the display area discussing and reading the items.
5. After several weeks, have the children sort the items they have collected into categories. (We often make a graph of the different types of artifacts we collected.) Make a class book of cereal boxes or foods, another of traffic signs, and so on. These books can be saved in the classroom library. I often laminate the pages before binding them together since I have discovered that these become favorite and beloved books that get lots of use.
6. Take pictures of any restaurants or stores from which the children have brought artifacts. Create a riddle book. On one side of the page, display the artifacts, for instance, a Ronald McDonald, a Happy Meal sack or a picture of a toy from a Happy Meal. On the reverse side of the page, display the picture of the actual McDonald's restaurant from your neighborhood with its sign and the golden arches. Children love to look at the artifacts and guess the name of the restaurant, naming the letters on the sign, sounding out the words, and doing other phonemic awareness activities. These pages can be scanned into a HyperStudio stack to make a slide show for the children to use at your computer center or post on your school Web site. Having an actual picture of the restaurant located in your own school neighborhood makes this more meaningful for the students. That way they will be looking for the signs and logos as they travel around their neighborhood, getting more and more reading practice almost daily and getting feedback from their grown-ups about what great readers they are becoming!

**Web Resources**

Kids' Safety Site from Texas Department of Transportation
http://www.dot.state.tx.us/kidsonly/SafetyPg/Safety.html
On this site, you will find many of the traffic signs familiar to students.

## Student Assessment/Reflections

1. The students will self-assess as they read and reread the books they have created. Often during independent reading time, the children will read these books individually, in pairs, or in groups. They also like to read these books to parents, the principal, other teachers, and visitors—or even take them home to share with their families. If it is made into a HyperStudio slide show, it can be up and running during an open house or during conferences.

2. I save these books from year to year as a permanent part of our classroom library. They remain favorites especially during individual reading time.

3. To further involve parents, you may have them fill out the survey as both a pre- and post-assessment. This helps them share in the children's excitement and helps them understand that this is an important stage in becoming a reader.


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4. As I encourage my students to reflect on their ability to read these books independently, they delight in their realization that they are indeed readers!

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## NCTE/IRA Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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Dear Parents,
One of the most exciting events in a child's life is learning to read. It happens in many ways, and there are many steps along the road. We are partners in helping your child become a reader. I invite you to help me watch for and celebrate the milestones along your child's path to literacy.
The reading of signs and labels is an exciting stage as your child grows as a reader. Circle the response that most closely matches what you see your child doing and return it to me in about a week. I will be sending this survey home again in about a month as we monitor your child's growth in these skills. Please add any other observations you wish to share on the back of this paper. Thanks!

_____

Child_____

Date_____

1. My child tries to read traffic signs (stop signs, school crossing, etc.).

often occasionally not yet

2. My child tries to read signs on restaurants and stores (McDonald's, Burger King, Sears, etc.).

often occasionally not yet

3. My child tries to read the labels on cereal boxes.

often occasionally not yet

4. My child tries to read other labels (Coke, Pepsi, Snickers, Milky Way, etc.).

often occasionally not yet

Please add any other observations on the back of this paper.

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# Student Rubric

Yes!
- I was a good listener.
- I followed directions.
- I shared my ideas.
- I brought lots of things that I can read.

OK
- I tried to listen most of the time.
- I tried to follow directions most of the time.
- I sometimes shared my ideas.
- I brought one or two things that I can read.

Not Yet
- I forgot to listen.
- I didn't follow directions very well.
- I didn't share my ideas.
- I didn't bring anything for our display.

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